



## THE WELL WOMAN

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW | 2023 FORECAST

**2022**

**YEAR IN REVIEW**

**DEFINING  
OURSELVES  
FOR  
OURSELVES**

**BWW MAKING MOVES**

**2022 WINTER WELLNESS GUIDE**

**A VISION  
OF  
WELLNESS  
FOR THE FUTURE**





# DEFINING OURSELVES FOR OURSELVES



*Photo by Ashley Yang from our Prop 1 Policy Brunch*

For far too long, Black Women have been defined by others, often without their inclusion, and rarely with their consent. The Well Woman is an answer from **Black Women for Wellness (BWW)** to reclaim their voice and voice their victories. We know that wellness has many dimensions, in addition to sharing the wins, updates, and highlights from our organization. It is our desire to share a complete picture of the lived experiences of the Black women in our community on their journey to wellness in every area .

We will boldly and proudly proclaim our personal and collective victories through this publication which will feature our accomplishments, challenges, and dreams through various mediums.

The **Well Woman** is a monthly digital magazine that will explore and highlight the many aspects of wellness, and tell the story of our mission and our people.





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"The Founders BWW were very grounded in our reality, resiliency and lived experiences as Black women; we were already dealing with issues affecting the health of black women and girls; and we were already members of the Leimert Park community in which BWW was founded. We decided to provide our own solutions."

*Janette Robinson-Flint*



## JAN'S STORY


Women's health has been a long-term priority for Robinson-Flint. Before co-founding BWW, she had years of experience developing curriculum on health education with a focus on prenatal care and fighting to reduce infant mortality rates.

While pregnant, a doctor prescribed her medication for an illness. While picking up the medication from the pharmacy, the pharmacist warned her that the medication was not safe to take during pregnancy. When Robinson Flint confronted the doctor with this information, his response was, "It's a gray area." The anger and frustration she felt that day drove her to learn more about birth and pregnancy, and in turn to share that knowledge with other women so they would be able to make informed health decisions and ask the right questions.

Then, in 1995, Robinson Flint attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. She described attending that conference as a life-changing experience and two years later, along with friends and colleagues, she co-founded **Black Women for Wellness**.

The founders were not carrying out a research study on this population. Theirs was a natural progression of concerned community members banding together to form an organization that communicates, educates and advocates for reproductive justice and other health issues uniquely affecting black women and girls.





**GIVE YOURSELF  
CREDIT**

**GIVEN THE  
CIRCUMSTANCES  
YOU ARE DOING  
WELL**



# A FIELD OF FLOWERS

## AN ODE TO OUR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STAFF & VOLUNTEERS



**Black Women for Wellness** was privileged to retain employment for more than 20 Civic Engagement Canvassers and Volunteers. Their work helped educate thousands about their voting options, staying healthy during COVID-19, and community centered perspective on the measures and policies at stake at the ballot box. The magic of this outreach initiative is rooted in the fact that our Canvassers and Phone Bankers were not hired politicians or lobbyist, but members of the community speaking to their friends, loved ones, and neighbors about issues that impact them. In speaking with them as we closed the season, much of the team shared stories of personal development and overcoming challenges through their experiences in the field.





# The Numbers

## A WHOLE LOTTA KNOCKIN'

Our Canvassers built relationships with the residents of Los Angeles County passing out thousands of our 2022 Prop Guide.

- C3 doors knocked **4500+**
- C3 calls made **6500+**
- C4 doors knocked (Yes on 1) **1150+**
- C4 calls made (Yes on 1) **5400+**

## Testimonials from the Team

"This was a major election and BWW staff come together as one reaching out and connecting with our community on various important issues that affect us all statewide and across the country."

### BWW Canvasser on the Midterms

"This campaign touched a lot of nerves on many levels. The autonomy of oneself male AND female is paramount! That type of freedom should not be touched. These were the sentiments of the community. The fact that people were able to express themselves and talk about a real serious issue to a stranger was therapy for some."

### BWW Phone Banker on Yes on 1 Campaign

"What really worked for me in the field was the voter guide. That was a much needed piece of material because it helped people decide who to vote for and people were happy to receive that guide."

### BWW Canvasser on Midterms

# BWW MADE MOVES IN 2022

BEFORE 2022 CLOSED, WE HAD THE CHANCE TO SPEAK WITH BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS STAFF. WE ASKED THEM TO SHARE THEIR TOP PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE YEAR. TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THEY TOLD US.

## SHARING OUR WINS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2022



FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Jan*

- Happy to have a staff that supports vision and executes that envision in alignment with their expertise and talent.
- We hosted a 2 week RJ conference and built international relationships
- I am proud of the Consistency of Sisters@8, particularly the African world news segments that provide



GRANTS MANAGER

*Akil*

- Increased Capacity around Communicating with Funders and Donors so they are willing to continue funding as well as creating new funding streams.
- Learned about resource mobilization and seeing it in action
- Onboarded a Full Management team full of talent now working together to actualize the mission of BWW
- Partnering with community Orgs to engage in Community Events as partners and collaborators



POLICY ANALYST

*Onyemma*

- Built relationships and collaborating with state legislators on strategies to move our policy work forward.
- Created 45 policy recommendations 15 of which were signed into law
- \$200 million state allocation for advancing reproductive healthcare in the state
- Facilitated Cross movement pollination in Reproductive Justice spaces



SISTERS IN MOTION PROGRAM MANAGER

*Charity*

- Contributed to round table to process possibilities for Food Justice
- Completing first ever mentorship program with Girl Scouts Los Angeles





#### SISTERS IN CONTROL PROGRAM MANAGER

Kheti

- Built relationships with school principals and contacts to get our Sex Ed health programs into the schools.
- Prepared up to launch in foster care homes in 2023 working together with the Free the Pill campaign collaborating with Planned Parenthood to ensure culturally competence.
- Welcomed a new maternal and infant health coordinator, a new Get Smart before you get sexy coordinator and new RJ program manager.
- Successfully Launched our Get Smart Newsletter



#### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM LEAD

Tianna

- Co-Hosted 3 Black Beauty Webinars
- Developed profession and learned new tools to execute work
- Advanced voice as advocate in partnership with organizations like Stand LA



#### SISTERS IN MOTION PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Adia

- Engaged Black chefs who not only prepare amazing food but know how to effectively connect with folks across virtual platforms. Chef Nyesha, Chef Tee, and Chef Mel have been amazing chefs that we have welcomed to the Kitchen Divas family, and we hope to continue working with them in 2023!
- Starting BMM/Falling into Fitness
- The Body Matters and Movement program launched in 2022, and we have had consistent participation from community members all year round.



#### SISTERS@EIGHT PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

Annette

- Sisters@Eight: International Women's Day:
  - Was able to broadcast with national and International participants
- Bring a Brotha to Breakfast Hosted First in-person S@E event since prior to the pandemic
- Veteran's Day Event: We saluted Black Women and provided resources.



#### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MANAGER

Astrid

- As a result of our advocacy efforts Johnson & Johnson agreed to stop sales and production of talc based baby powder globally. Black Women for Wellness is celebrating the news that Johnson & Johnson will no longer sell products known to cause harm.
- With STAND LA, were actively engaged in the push to approve an ordinance that will prohibit new oil and gas extraction activities and phase out existing oil drilling citywide, a victory driven by a decade of advocacy by and for frontline communities.

DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE AND EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT



Kendall

- Implemented of Grant Tracking tool
- Over 60 grants awarded and received this year.
- Onboarding new board members
- Redeveloped our engagement with Future Los Angeles

COMMUNITY LIAISON NORTHERN CALIFORNIA OFFICE



Kim

- DPP Program Diabetes prevention program
- Summer Family Wellness Jam Event
- Kitchen Diva food distribution. Helping families with food insecurities and mothers with diapers.
- Over 70 people participated in community wellness event feature on SF news

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MANAGER



Meeron

- Engaged Black chefs who not only prepare amazing food but know how to effectively connect with folks across virtual platforms. Chef Nyesha, Chef Tee, and Chef Mel have been amazing chefs that we have welcomed to the Kitchen Divas family, and we hope to continue working with them in 2023!
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## our theory of change

**Our Theory of Change:** Black Women for Wellness believes in the strength and wisdom of our community and allies. That we have the solutions, resources and responsibility to create the shifts and change needed to make an impact on our health status.

Each of us must develop our personal power, hold accountable and support acknowledged leadership, and importantly contribute to our survival and growth as a community.

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

### ABOUT US



Let's stay in touch and  
create a community of  
support!

#### WEBSITE

GetSmartB4UGetSexy.com  
BWWLA.org

#### NEWSLETTER

<https://forms.gle/FmVb9raFvAzwozEN9>

#### SEND A MESSAGE

<https://getsmartb4ugetsexy.com/send-us-a-message/>

### GETSMART B4U GETSEXY

is a comprehensive sex education program that provides prevention and intervention resources for youth and young adults (ages 12-24) particularly those who are African American, Black, girls, in foster care systems, and/or at high risk for sexually transmitted infections.



## *From the Polls to the Seats of Power*

In California, we celebrated the historic election of Karen Bass as the first Black Woman mayor of Los Angeles. She is no stranger to being a history maker, first elected to the California State Assembly in 2004, she entered as the only Black woman in the chamber. She went on to become the first Black woman speaker in any state house. Nearly two decades later, she breaks yet another barrier. Bass doesn't stand alone in her victory. California celebrates a host of victories by Black Women candidates:

***Tina McKinnor*** was re-elected to the CA State Assembly in District 61

***Lola Smallwood-Cuevas*** was elected CA State Senator in District 28

***Mia Bonta*** was re-elected to CA State Assembly in District 18

***Malia Cohen*** was elected as California State Controller





# *From the Polls to the Seats of Power*

We have long known and understood that when Black women win, everyone wins. When given the resources and opportunities to access power, we continuously use that power to build the wellness of our communities in ways that benefit everyone, not just us.

The victories of these women are in no small part due to the political education and voter engagement work of Black women led by organizations like Black Women For Wellness (BWW). In 2022, BWW organized, mobilized, and voted across California to fight for a political agenda that supports the health and well being of Black women and girls, our families and communities. BWW spoke up against the racism, misogyny, and corporate greed that continue to be pervasive in the political landscape. BWW works to consistently engage voters, conduct voter education, get out the vote, and assist and support our community in holding elected officials accountable for their vote. Over the course of this year, our field team collectively knocked on more than 40,000 doors, called more than 89,000 people, texted more than 647,000 voters, and distributed an innumerable amount of voter guides and information on the impacts of propositions measures on our ballots. Black women showed up at the polls in numbers, and now it is time for Black women to secure those seats of power that elected positions hold.

It is beyond time for Black Women to be encouraged, groomed, and supported WHEN THEY RUN FOR office. Black Women for Wellness celebrates and acknowledges our voting muscle, now it is time to begin the plot and plan for celebrations of our elections to office.

Historically, Black women have been the stalwarts of political progress and have often been the only barrier of preservation for democracy against those who seek to destroy it. The ability to legislate, run governments, and shape public policy is the primary way to gain protection in a democracy. Black women must be represented in legislative halls at all levels of government in order for Black lives to matter which ultimately means eliminating the disparities that threaten their well-being. Fortunately, across the country, Black women are running for higher office—and winning.

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*Written by Tyson Evans*

APRIL VALENTINE  
APRIL 26, 1991 – JANUARY 10, 2023

# Justice for April

In early January, *April Valentine* and her partner entered Centinela Hospital in Inglewood, California to experience the joyful birth of their daughter.

Joy quickly turned to panic as April complained of numbness in her legs, reportedly ignored by the nurses.

And panic gave rise to sorrow as April Valentine died before she was able to birth her daughter, Aniya, on January 10, 2023. Aniya will never know her mother.

April was a person of immeasurable love and respect for people all over. She was an advocate for the unhoused, a volunteer with local organizations in Inglewood and South LA, and a mentor to many young women. She was only 31 years old.

Sadly, April's death was likely preventable and reflects a pattern of medical negligence toward Black people giving birth in hospitals across the country—often the result of unconscious bias among medical professionals.

JUSTICE

4

APRIL

VALENTINE

APRIL VALENTINE  
APRIL 26, 1991 – JANUARY 10, 2023

#### THE FACTS

243%

Black women are 243% more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes than white women

SOURCE: KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

42%

From 2018 to 2020, the Black maternal mortality rate has increased by more than 42%

SOURCE: KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

#JUSTICEFORAPRIL

Please consider the following actions in support of April, her daughter Aniya, and the countless Black mothers who have fallen victim to a racist, negligent medical system.

01

CONTACT THE ELECTED OFFICIALS TAGGED BELOW AND URGE THEM TO INVESTIGATE THE PATTERN OF MALPRACTICE AT CENTINELA HOSPITAL

02

DEMAND THAT PRIME HEALTHCARE'S CEO, DR. PREM REDDY, STEP DOWN IMMEDIATELY FOR HIS NEGLIGENCE

03

DONATE TO APRIL'S DAUGHTER'S TRUST FUND AT [BIT.LY/APRILVALENTINE](https://bit.ly/aprilvalentine)

04

SHARE APRIL'S STORY AND OTHERS LIKE IT



# WHEN ADVOCACY WINS!



## Los Angeles County Blocks New Oil Wells, Mirroring Citywide Ban

- Ordinance to ban new oil, gas drilling takes effect in 30 days
- County also developing strategy to phase out existing wells

Tianna Shaw-Wakeman, Program Lead for BWW's Environmental Justice Program and STAND LA representative, celebrates outside of the LA County Administration building with community residents and other community-based organizations who have been crucial advocates in the fight against neighborhood oil drilling.

## THE FIRST LADIES OF CA + NJ VISIT BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS



This past week Black Women For Wellness and Black Women For Wellness Action Project had the privilege of hosting gubernatorial first ladies, Jennifer Siebel Newsom of California and Tammy Murphy of New Jersey. They toured our offices guided by our Executive Director, Janette Robinson-Flint and our Policy Analyst, Onyemma Obiekea.

Both First Ladies shared their commitment and passion to end the Maternal Health disparities so prevalent throughout our country. We had the opportunity to share information our past and present policy priorities such as SB 65, also known as the Momnibus Bill and AB 366, also known as Healthy Futures for Foster Youth.

As we continue our commitment to improve the conditions and outcomes for for Black birthing people and their families through advocacy, education, policy, and civic engagement, we are happy to be building these relationships with influential leaders with direct access to the seats of power.



# INTEGRATING THE LEGACY OF AUDRE LORDE IN THE MODERN REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Cover Story

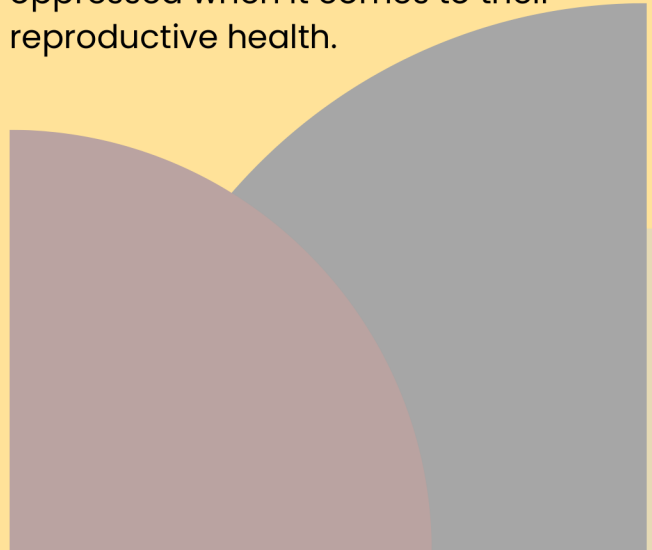
Audre Lorde



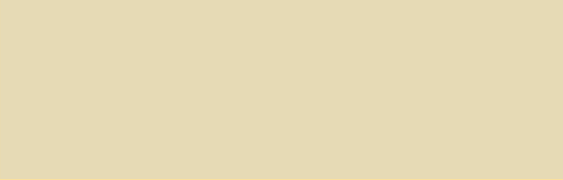
One of Lorde's most significant contributions to the social justice movement was her work as a reproductive justice advocate for Black women. Lorde recognized that Black women's reproductive rights were not just about access to abortion or birth control, but also about the right to make decisions about their bodies and lives free from systemic oppression. She understood that reproductive justice was inextricably linked to other social justice issues such as racism, poverty, and violence against women.

As we enter Black History Month, a time where many are more intentional about honoring the legacy of the sturdy shoulders on which we stand, we are reflecting on a pioneer and thought leader Audre Lorde. It is evident in 2023, that there is still much work to do to end health disparities for Black women and ensure their overall wellness without the exclusion of their reproductive health.

Audre Lorde, a renowned Black feminist poet and activist, once said, "I am my best work. I am a Black woman." This statement holds true in the context of the reproductive justice movement, as Black women have historically been marginalized and oppressed when it comes to their reproductive health.







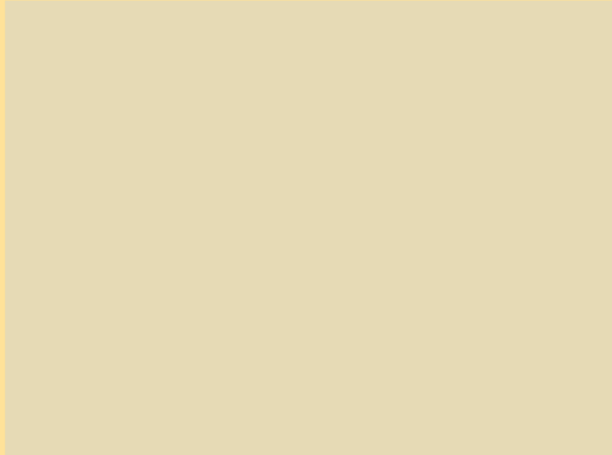
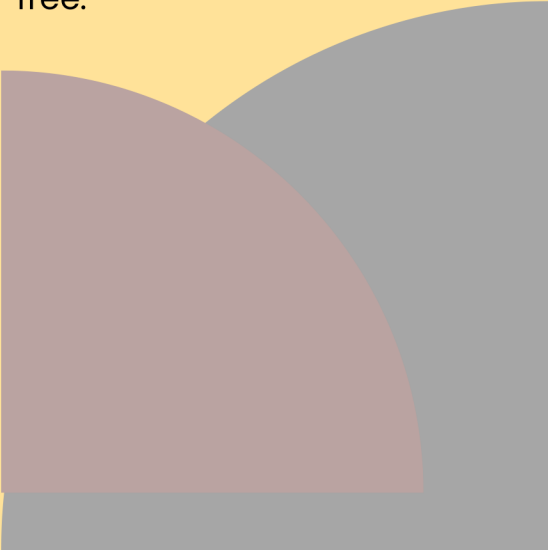
In her writing, Lorde spoke candidly about her own experiences with breast cancer, hysterectomy, and menopause, and how these experiences had shaped her understanding of reproductive justice. She recognized that the medical establishment had often failed Black women, and that the reproductive rights movement needed to be inclusive of the experiences of Black women.

.To address these issues, it is crucial to bring Audre Lorde's legacy into the modern reproductive justice movement. Lorde's intersectional approach to feminism acknowledges that the oppression of Black women is not just based on race, but also on gender, class, and sexuality. She believed that the personal is political, and that individuals have the power to create change through their lived experiences.

In her words, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." This statement highlights the importance of self-care and self-empowerment in the fight for reproductive justice. Black women must be at the forefront of the movement, leading the charge and making their voices heard.

Furthermore, Lorde's emphasis on coalition-building and solidarity is crucial in the fight for reproductive justice. As she stated, "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." This highlights the need for intersectional and inclusive movement-building, where the struggles and experiences of all marginalized communities are acknowledged and valued.

Audre Lorde's legacy is crucial in the fight for reproductive justice for Black women. Her intersectional approach and emphasis on self-empowerment and coalition-building must be integrated into the modern reproductive justice movement. Together, we can work towards ensuring that all Black women have access to safe and affordable reproductive health care, and live in a world where they are truly free.



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## ***A Vision of Wellness for the Future***



I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that systemic oppression and environmental hazards have on my community. That is why I am so passionate about creating a holistic future of wellness for Black women and girls in Los Angeles and around the world.

Growing up in a neighborhood affected by air and water pollution, I witnessed the impact that environmental hazards can have on a community. My neighbors suffered from respiratory illnesses, and many struggled with infertility. This inspired me to become an advocate for environmental justice, and to work towards creating a world where Black communities are no longer disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards.

Unfortunately, the fight for environmental justice is just one aspect of the larger struggle for wellness faced by Black women and girls. In addition to environmental hazards, Black women also face numerous barriers to accessing quality reproductive healthcare, leading to alarmingly high rates of maternal mortality. And Black infants are more likely to be born preterm and experience infant mortality, due to a lack of access to quality prenatal care and systemic racism within the healthcare system.



But there is hope. I believe that we can create a holistic future of wellness for Black women and girls by coming together as a community and supporting one another. This is where community wellness programs and Afrocentric healing modalities, such as yoga and meditation, come into play.

Community wellness programs bring Black women and girls together to support one another, providing a safe and inclusive space for us to connect, heal, and grow. Afrocentric yoga and meditation practices, rooted in African healing traditions, offer a way for us to connect with our bodies, minds, and spirits, and to tap into the wisdom of our ancestors.



By incorporating these practices into our lives, we can not only heal from the individual and collective trauma caused by systemic oppression, but we can also build resilience and strength, allowing us to continue the fight for justice.

In conclusion, creating a holistic future of wellness for Black women and girls in Los Angeles and around the world requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the root causes of these issues and the immediate needs of Black women and families. It also requires coming together as a community and supporting one another through community wellness programs and Afrocentric healing modalities. By doing so, we can work towards a future where Black women and girls have the resources and support they need to thrive.



# BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

EDUCATION • EMPOWERMENT • ADVOCACY

Black Women for Wellness believes in the strength and wisdom of our community and allies. We believe that we have the solutions, resources and responsibility to create the shifts and change needed to impact our health status. Each of us must develop our personal power, hold accountable and support acknowledged leadership, and most importantly, contribute to our survival and growth as a community.

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